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Educational participation in Western Australia is no longer just for the young

Many Western Australians are continuing with, or returning to, formalised learning beyond the compulsory years. This is one of the findings contained in a special report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in the publication **Western Australian Statistical Indicators, December Quarter 2001**.

The report traces patterns of participation in education and training by Western Australians across the life stages - from childhood, through youth and adulthood, to the retirement years. It shows that:

- Western Australia's school population is growing. In August 2000, there were 317,761 full-time students attending schools, an 11.5% increase compared with August 1990. The number of Indigenous students enrolled in Western Australian schools increased by 46% during the same period to 17,227 - just over 5% of the overall school population.
- During this past decade, the trend has been towards greater participation in the non-government school sector, the proportion of students undertaking schooling in this sector growing from 24.4% to 29.0% (an increase of 22,419 people).
- Young Western Australians (aged 15-24 years) were more likely to be participating in post compulsory education and training in May 2000 than those in the same age group a decade earlier. Between 1990 and 2000, the education participation rate for young Western Australians rose by almost one third (30%), an increase of 41,273 students. Nationally, the participation rate for young people grew by 23% during the same period.
- People aged 25-64 years made up a substantial proportion (35%) of all Western Australian students in May 2000, despite participating in education and training at a lower rate than young people. In May 2000, there were over 80,000 students aged 25-64 years attending educational institutions in Western Australia, almost half (48%) of which were aged 25-34 years.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the education participation rate for 25-34 year olds increased by 34% compared with a 30% growth in the rate of participation among 15-24 year olds.
- In May 2000, 72% of students aged 25-64 years studying for a recognised qualification were also in paid employment compared with 48% of students aged 15-24 years. Of the working students aged 25-64 years, 60% were full-time workers undertaking part-time study while 23% were part-time workers undertaking part-time study.
- Just over one in ten (or 18,080) older Western Australians (aged 65 years and over) were attending an educational institution in August 1996. Between 1991 and 1996, their

education participation rate increased by 13%.

Details are in **Western Australian Statistical Indicators, December Quarter 2001** (cat. no. 1367.5).

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